

<p>SIGNS OF THE TRAITS: WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR WHAT YOU COULD SAY</p>

IDEAS

WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR...

- Complexity (lines, colors)
- Attention to detail
- Noticing little things others might not notice
- Clarity, focus, sense of purpose
- A message or story, complete or not

To reinforce IDEAS,

YOU COULD SAY...

- I know just what you mean!
- You're really using writing to communicate.
- I can really picture what you're telling me!
- No one else thought to write about Venus fly traps [or whatever] – how did you come up with such an original idea?
- I loved your topic/idea!! It made me think of...
- You really notice things – look at these details.
- What is the most important thing this author had to tell us?
- What do you picture in your mind when you listen to this writing?

ORGANIZATION

WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR...

- Pictures and/or text balanced on the page
- Coordination between text and picture (they go together)
- Multiple pictures that show sequence
- Grouping of details, ideas
- Text that shows sequence: *First...then...after...next...later...last*
- Text that shows connections: *because...so...when...however...*
- Sense of beginning: *One day...Last week...When I was little...*
- Sense of ending: *So finally... That's all... At last...The end*
- Cause and effect structure in text (or picture series)
- Problem solving structure in text (or picture series)
- Chronological structure in text (or picture series)
- Surprises that work
- Sticking with one main topic or idea

To reinforce ORGANIZATION,

YOU COULD SAY...

- I can see how these ideas/pictures go together.
- You knew just how to begin (or end).
- This happened because this happened – that's a good way to organize ideas.
- You organized your story by time... first this, then this...
- I wanted to know what would happen next!
- What a surprise ending!
- You solved a problem – that's a good way to organize ideas.
- [When reading aloud] This story has the title _____. What do you suppose it's about?
- So far this author has told us _____. What do you predict will happen next? How do you predict this will end?
- Let me read just the beginning of this writer's story/essay. Is this a good way for the writer to begin? Why?
- Can you tell me back this story/essay in a few sentences?

VOICE

WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR...

- Individuality
- Sparkle
- Personality
- Liveliness, playfulness
- Emotion
- The unusual
- Taking a chance by trying something new or different
- Recognizing that the writing/drawing is for both self-and audience
- Tailoring communication to an audience
- Response to VOICE in the writing/art of others

To reinforce VOICE,

YOU COULD SAY...

- Your feelings come through loud and clear here.
- I could tell this was you!
- This story/picture made me laugh/cry/feel what you must have felt.
- You seem to be writing to/for [specify your best guest on audience]. Is that right?
- I love the way you help your reader see and feel the things you are seeing or feeling when you write. There's a word for that – VOICE.
- Your writing rings with voice. It made me want to keep reading!
- Do you think the story we just read had VOICE?
- Which of these two pieces [share two samples orally] has more VOICE in your opinion? Why do you think that?
- If VOICE were a color, what would it be? If it were a food...If it were a sound...If it were a place...

WORD CHOICE

WHAT TO LOOK (& LISTEN) FOR...

- Playing with letter forms, letters, letter strings, first words, labels, etc.
- Stretching to use new words
- Curiosity about words
- Verbs, verbs, verbs (energy words)
- Precise words
- Unusual use of words or phrases (in speaking or writing or labeling)
- Striking words or phrases
- Imitation of words or phrases heard in literature (or any reading you share in class)

To reinforce WORD CHOICE,

YOU COULD SAY...

- I see you're making a connection between letters and words.
- This word/phrase goes well with this picture.
- I love this word – how did you think of it?
- What was your favorite word in the story we just read?
- What do you think the word _____ means? Make a guess.
- When you said *streaked*, I could really picture the whole thing...
- I love this word – *flourishing* – how did you think of it?
- This picture makes me think of the word [...??]
- _____ was just the right word to describe/explain _____.

SENTENCE FLUENCY

WHAT TO LOOK FOR...

- Experimenting with word strings to form sentences
- Rudimentary sentences – subject and verb
- Use of more complex sentences
- Multiple sentences with different beginnings, varied lengths
- Rhythm, cadence in oral or written language
- Long and short sentences
- Love of rhythmic language (e.g., poetry)

To reinforce SENTENCE FLUENCY,

YOU COULD SAY...

- I read this aloud and I love the sound of it!
- You seem to know what a sentence is – good for you!
- You have a long sentence, then a short one – I like that.
- Your sentences begin in different ways – that's great!
- I like this phrase – *After a while* – it helps me understand when things happened.
- Listen to this piece [read a fluent piece aloud]. Now, listen to this one [read the same one chopped into 3 or 4 word sentences that all begin the same way]. Do you hear the difference? Which one do you like?
- Here's one of my favorite pieces [choose one to read aloud]. I think it has rhythm. See if you hear it, too.
- This picture makes me think of the word [...???].

CONVENTIONS

WHAT TO LOOK FOR...

- Left to right orientation on the page
- Up to down orientation on the page
- Letters facing appropriate directions
- Distinction between upper and lower case letters
- Spaces between words
- Spaces between lines
- Name on the page
- Use of title
- Use of labels
- Use of indentation to show a new paragraph
- Dots over i's
- Exploration with punctuation, whether conventionally placed or not
- Rudimentary spelling, showing a connection of sounds to words
- Readable spelling (can be interpreted without the writer's help)

To reinforce CONVENTIONS,

YOU COULD SAY...

- You remembered to write your name at the top – thanks!
- I love it when you put a title on your paper – it gives me a good clue about your message/story!
- You remembered to put spaces between your words – boy, that helps!
- I could sound out most of these words. I read it without any help.
- How did you know to put a comma/period/question mark/capital here?
- I notice you start on this side (left) and write this way (right); you're really paying attention to how books are written.
- I see you've discovered ellipses [or whatever is new]. Great! When you see that mark, what does it mean to you?
- When you work to make your spelling readable, it really helps your reader a lot. Super!

One of the best examples of good teaching I have ever encountered was with a golf professional. On my first lesson, he said, "Here is a bucket of balls...hit 'em." A few minutes later he wandered back and quietly said, "Keep hitting them, only this time keep your head down, eye on the ball." By the next bucket of balls he had introduced one more skill for the day...no more. Before a few weeks were out, he had quietly attended to my feet, grip, shoulder level, and follow through. A few years later I realized with a start that every single one of my problems was visible on that first lesson. If I had attended to all of them that first day, I would probably have missed the ball entirely and resigned in disgust from ever playing golf again.

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Writing: Teacher & Children At Work

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